United Nations

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization

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Supplement No.1 (A/52/1)

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I

Contours of the new era

1. We live in an era of realignment. At the international and national levels alike, fundamental forces are at work reshaping patterns of social organization, structures of opportunities and constraints, the objects of aspiration and the sources of fear. As is true of all transitional periods, very different expressions of the human predicament coexist in uneasy tension today: globalization envelops the world even as fragmentation and the assertion of differences are on the rise; zones of peace expand while outbursts of horrific violence intensify; unprecedented wealth is being created but large pockets of poverty remain endemic; the will of the people and their integral rights are both celebrated and violated; science and technology enhance human life at the same time as their byproducts threaten planetary life-support systems.

2. It is not beyond the powers of political volition to tip the scale in this transition, towards a more secure and predictable peace, greater economic well-being, social justice, and environmental sustainability. No country can achieve these global public goods on its own, however, just as none is exempt from the risks and costs of doing without them. Multilateral diplomacy was invented and has been sustained because political leaders as well as the people they represent have recognized this simple fact. Indeed, the twentieth-century project of international organization is all about how to stretch national interests and preferences, temporally as well as spatially, so as to produce in greater quantities the public goods that the political market place of inter-State behaviour would otherwise underproduce. The United Nations, with its near-universal membership, its comprehensive mandate, a span of activities that ranges from the normative to the operational, and an institutional presence that is at once global, regional and country-based can and should be at the very centre of this endeavour.

3. On 17 December 1996, Member States did me great honour in electing me the Organization's seventh Secretary-General. Since taking office, I have had one overriding objective: to induce greater unity of purpose, coherence of efforts and responsiveness throughout the Organization so that it can more effectively help meet the challenges of our times. Each of the component entities that comprise the United Nations has made adjustments to the epochal changes of the past decade, and their progress during this past year is summarized in these pages. As we go forward, however, the Organization must learn to make far better use of its major potential source of institutional strength: the many complementarities and synergies that exist within it. The comprehensive package of reforms that I presented to the General Assembly on 16 July 1997, and which the Assembly will consider at its current session, were designed with that aim in mind.

4. This — my first — annual report on the work of the Organization proceeds as follows. The remainder of this introduction briefly highlights some of the key forces that are transforming the world around the United Nations and, therefore, its agenda. Chapter II presents an overview of the Organization's activities of the past year, with a thematic emphasis on how the different programme areas have sought to adapt to and guide those forces in keeping with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the programme priorities set by Member States. In chapter III, I offer some overall reflections on the work of the Organization, and I indicate how and why my proposals for institutional reform constitute a necessary next step in ensuring that the Organization remains a vital and effective instrument of international collaboration as the world heads into a new century — and a new millennium.

* * *

5. The diverse ramifications of the end of the cold war remain a palpable factor in the world even today, nearly a decade later. The cessation of super-Power rivalry and military confrontation set in train a whole host of progressive changes within and among countries. At the same time, the international community is still struggling with the adverse consequences of bipolarity's collapse. The inter-ethnic conflicts that followed the break-up of several multi-ethnic States, whether in Central Asia or the former Yugoslavia, are tragic cases in point. Some of the former proxy battlegrounds of the cold war in Asia and Africa continue to

reel from instability. States that were held together by their perceived strategic utility to one side or the other in some instances have suffered grievously as a result; this was true, for example, in the Horn of Africa earlier in the decade, and most recently in the former Zaire. The help of all States, especially those that played leading roles in the cold war, is necessary to undo its remaining social, economic and political distortions.

6. A second fundamental force reshaping the world today is globalization; it is perhaps the most profound source of international transformation since the industrial revolution began to turn external trade into a routine feature of international life. Beginning in the 1960s, with the limited lifting of capital controls and the gradual emergence of multinational manufacturing firms, financial markets have become increasingly integrated and the production of goods and services transnationalized. Numbers tell part of the story: international financial flows tower over world trade by a ratio of 60:1, while the growth in world trade itself typically exceeds the increase in world gross domestic product by more than 5 per cent each year. The other part of the story is in the organization of these flows: they take place within markets which, for most purposes, have become single markets, and within firms or among related parties that treat the world, synoptically, as a single market place.

7. Globalization and the liberalization that produced it have generated a sustained period of economic expansion, together with the most rapid reconfiguration of international economic geography ever. Unprecedented wealth and standards of living exist in the industrialized world. Elsewhere, some countries that struggled with poverty a mere generation ago are now economic growth poles in their own right. Over the course of the next generation, a majority of the world's most rapidly growing economies will be located in what is now the developing world.

8. Globalization also poses numerous policy challenges, however. Among them are the inherent risks of markets lacking critical regulatory safeguards, as is true in some respects of international financial markets. Globalization is also eroding the efficacy of some policy instruments by which the industrialized countries had pursued full employment and social stability throughout the era that followed the Second World War. No consensus exists yet about how to replace the neo-Keynesian compromise that governed the political economy of advanced capitalism, but it would be folly to believe that the public in the industrialized countries is prepared simply to return to an era of unfettered market forces.

9. Additional policy challenges face the developing countries. To begin with, the benefits of globalization still affect relatively few among them. Some 40 per cent of the direct foreign investment flows to developing countries is accounted for by China alone; East Asia as a whole absorbs nearly two thirds. In contrast, Africa is the recipient of a meagre 4 per cent, while official development assistance has fallen. Among the countries bypassed by global capital flows are those that are experiencing the most enduring poverty. As indicated in the 1997 *Human Development Report*, published by the United Nations Development Programme, lack of global financial resources is no impediment to eradicating extreme poverty. Pro-growth policies at the national level coupled with targeted external assistance can enable currently marginalized countries to become active participants in the global economy. I consider it to be a core mission of the United Nations to help facilitate their successful transitions.

10. Furthermore, developing countries are in the difficult position of having to realign the character of their state apparatus in several directions simultaneously. The growing recognition that the State is not itself a creator of wealth has led to widespread privatization and deregulation, but even in market-oriented developing countries the State has critical roles to play in providing an enabling environment for sustainable development. The World Bank's 1997 *World Development Report* shows systematically how crucial an effective State is in this regard, as evidence from the so-called newly industrializing countries had suggested for some time. Finding the appropriate balance, however, especially in contexts where civil society is weak and transnational forces overpowering, is an exceedingly complex task. Various United Nations "good governance" programmes are designed to assist individual Governments in defining the balance that best meets their needs.

11. Third, globalization rests on and is sustained by a remarkable revolution in its own right in information technology, particularly the integration of increasingly powerful computers with telecommunication systems that permit high volume and high quality real-time voice and data transmissions. Indeed, the adjective "global" refers less to a place than to a space defined by electronic flows and a state of mind. World currency markets are the most global of all in this sense, and what has come to be known as the global factory relies similarly on such electronic infrastructure.

12. The information revolution has unfolded most extensively in the industrialized world, but it also holds enormous potential for the developing countries. It diminishes the constraints of distance in manufacturing industry and many services, and offers new tools in the form of administrative capacities, long-distance learning, telemedicine, the more effective management of micro-credit systems, agricultural production, and for a variety of other applications. Major efforts should be undertaken to support greater acquisition and utilization of information technologies by the developing countries.

13. The intensification of global environmental interdependencies constitutes yet a fourth transformative force. At the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held at Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the international community endorsed the concept of sustainable development as the key to reconciling economic and social progress, which all desire, with safeguarding the planet's ecosystems, on which all depend. Many of these systems are under increasing stress, however, with adverse consequences that range from the local destructiveness of flash floods resulting from deforestation, to the slower but globally indivisible atmospheric warming that results from increased emissions of greenhouse gases. As witnessed by the "Rio +5" summit, however, held at United Nations Headquarters in June 1997, progress since Rio has been disappointing, whether in meeting targets for controlling environmental degradation or providing technological and financial assistance to developing countries. We hope for a more favourable outcome at the Kyoto session, later this year, of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

14. A fifth fundamental shift in the world today is the pronounced transnational expansion of civil society, itself made possible by a combination of political and technological changes. This is of great significance for the United Nations. Private investment capital exceeds by a factor of six the available official development assistance and must be further mobilized for development purposes. In recent years, the United Nations has found that much of its work at the country level, be it in humanitarian affairs, economic and social development, public health, or the promotion of human rights, intimately involves the diverse and dedicated contributions of non-governmental organizations and groups. In response to these growing manifestations of an ever-more robust global civil society, the United Nations is equipping itself to engage civil society and make it a true partner in its work. As part of my reform proposals, I have urged all United Nations entities to be open to and work closely with civil society organizations that are active in their respective sectors, and to facilitate increased consultation and cooperation between the United Nations and such organizations.

15. Sixth, and closely related, there is a growing trend towards democratization and respect for human rights. Countries in all parts of the world are voluntarily limiting the arbitrary powers of state agencies together with the abuses and the social and economic costs they engender. Some 120 countries now hold generally free and fair elections, the highest total in history. The social, economic and political benefits of basing systems of rule on the principles of human dignity and the will of the people are felt in domestic as well as regional peace and prosperity, though the transition to democracy itself is often slow and at times fraught with difficulty.

16. The same technological means that foster globalization and the transnational expansion of civil society also provide the infrastructure for expanding global networks of "uncivil society" — organized crime, drug traffickers, money launderers and terrorists. These parasitic elements constitute a seventh factor shaping the international agenda today. They corrupt local and in some instances national politics, undermine judiciaries, and pose security threats even to the most powerful States. I have moved rapidly to consolidate in a high profile office at Vienna all United Nations efforts to combat these elements, but a redoubling of resolve is still necessary for them to be controlled, involving new partnerships among national and international agencies.

17. Finally, and somewhat paradoxically, these integrative trends are accompanied by tendencies towards fragmentation. In some instances, what appears to be fragmentation is in fact a move towards decentralization in policy-making and administration due to the desire for greater efficiency, effectiveness and accountability, thus posing no grounds for concern. In other cases, as noted above, fragmentation has been a by-product of the collapse of bipolarity and has led to intra-communal strife and conflict. Economic globalization, too, has brought about instances of fragmentation because market forces can and often do undermine indigenous cultural values. Indeed, the broad uncertainties and insecurities engendered by fundamental change frequently result in a heightened quest to redefine and reassert collective identities.

18. At their best, identity politics provide a robust sense of social coherence and civic pride, which have salutary effects for economic development and the peaceful resolution of disputes at home and abroad. At their worst, however, identity politics result in the vilification of "the other", whether that other is a different ethnic or tribal group, a different religion, or a different nationality.

19. This particularistic and exclusionary form of identity politics has intensified in recent years within and among countries. It is responsible for some of the most egregious violations of international humanitarian law and, in several instances, of elementary standards of humanity: genocidal violence; the conscious targeting of civilian populations, often women and children, by factional combatants; rape as a deliberate instrument of organized terror; and attacks on emergency relief workers and missions. Negative forms of identity politics are a potent and potentially explosive force. Great care must be taken to recognize, confront and restrain them lest they destroy the potential for peace and progress that the new era holds in store.

20. Times of transformation can be times of confusion. The policy-making process can easily get caught in transition

traps, moments of discontinuity when taking the wrong step can have severe long-term consequences. The international community has an obligation to itself and to succeeding generations to strengthen the available multilateral mechanisms, among which the United Nations is a unique instrument of concerted action, so as to successfully harness the mutual benefits of change while managing its adverse effects. By adopting the proposals for reform I submitted to the General Assembly in July, Member States will equip the United Nations to better play its part in meeting this challenge.

II

Managing change

21. Throughout the 1990s, all parts of the United Nations have continuously adapted their strategies and programmes to the new and fluid international context, with the aim of supporting and anticipating the needs of Member States. A thematic overview of achievements in the main areas of activity during the past year follows.

A. Good governance, human rights and democratization

22. It is increasingly recognized that good governance is an essential building block for meeting the objectives of sustainable development, prosperity and peace. The situation of no two countries is precisely alike in this respect but, broadly speaking, and making due allowance for cultural differences, good governance comprises the rule of law, effective state institutions, transparency and accountability in the management of public affairs, respect for human rights, and the meaningful participation of all citizens in the political processes of their countries and in decisions affecting their lives.

* * *

23. At its resumed fiftieth session, in 1996, the General Assembly reviewed the question how to redefine and, where needed, redesign public sector institutions in the light of new global economic and social challenges, some of which were discussed above. The United Nations Secretariat and United Nations programmes and funds have moved to provide extensive governance-related support to large numbers of developing countries and to countries in Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. This takes the form of analytical work, diagnostic research, needs assessment, policy advice, technical assistance and advisory services. Support is provided to strengthen the functioning of specific institutions, such as judiciaries, parliaments and electoral bodies, as well as sectorally, including public sector financial management, privatization efforts, information technology, civil service reforms and the empowerment of civil society organizations.

24. For example, believing that sustainable prosperity and stability cannot be achieved without good governance, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been increasing the funds dedicated to this priority area: it now accounts for more than one third of all UNDP allocations. In July 1997, UNDP convened the first ever International Conference on Governance for Sustainable Growth and Equity, bringing to United Nations Headquarters elected officials, judges and community leaders from more than 100 countries. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), reflecting the growing reliance of national Governments on local authorities, has focused increasingly on strengthening local capacity and promoting community participation. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) also operates a governance programme, promoting strategies for women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming. Through UNIFEM support for women's political participation in Africa, for example, women candidates for public office have learned how to design effective campaign and media strategies. Similarly, the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs has supported training programmes for women both as voters and as electoral officials and candidates.

25. Post-conflict situations entail particular needs. It is our view that measures to strengthen capacity for governance must permeate national and international responses to emergency situations, and should begin as early as possible. Successful recovery from the dislocations produced by conflict is aided by moving rapidly towards meeting broad development challenges as well as creating adequate legal frameworks, judiciaries, law enforcement systems, stable social and political environments, and economic opportunities.

26. Expanding and enhancing the exchange of knowledge and experiences among developing countries is of growing importance. The United Nations Secretariat will facilitate this process through its capacity as a clearing house for information and research on public administration. As

resources like the Internet and the World Wide Web become increasingly available globally, various sources of information and expertise can be more readily accessed, while new and productive linkages and networks with the regional commissions, professional organizations and non-governmental organizations are more easily established.

* * *

27. Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations places the promotion of respect for human rights among the central purposes of the Organization. Increasingly in recent years, human rights have also come to be seen as an integral element of good governance.

28. The core human rights activities of the Organization took on renewed strength after the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action at the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights. Prior activities had focused largely on standard setting and the formal adoption of standards at the national level. The Vienna Declaration placed human rights in the context of development and democracy while reaffirming their universality. Together with the establishment of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, this has made it possible to approach human rights activities in practical as well as principled terms from a truly global perspective.

29. The United Nations instituted a major restructuring this year in the organization of the human rights secretariat at Geneva. In my July reform plans I went further, consolidating the Office of the High Commissioner and the Centre for Human Rights, thereby ensuring cohesion and consistency in priorities and activities. I am immensely pleased that the President of Ireland, Mary Robinson, is joining us as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and I know that she will work tirelessly and with sensitivity in the cause of universal human rights.

30. This past year has seen a dramatic increase in activities relating to the establishment of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights. Their aim is to strengthen the protection of the individual by providing access to remedies for human rights violations, including in circumstances where the more traditional institutions of protection, such as the judiciary, are not available, do not function effectively or are otherwise inaccessible. Some 15 projects currently assist Member States in this area. Additional projects are aimed at supporting regional arrangements, such as the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. These activities are typically undertaken in tandem with other United Nations entities, such as UNDP, and coincide with their efforts to promote good governance and sustainable development.

31. There has also been a pronounced increase in the involvement of human rights activities in field operations, directly reflecting decisions to that effect taken by the Security Council. Depending on the needs of the situation, these activities combine monitoring of human rights violations, education, training and other advisory services, and confidence-building measures. Currently, such operations exist in Abkhazia/Georgia, Burundi, Cambodia, Colombia, Gaza, Guatemala, Haiti, Malawi, Mongolia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia.

32. The human rights programme continues to address violations of human rights. Threats to the right to life and physical integrity, including extrajudicial executions and enforced disappearances, threats to freedom of expression and movement and to freedom from arbitrary arrest, and threats to the independence of the judiciary continue to be the focus of United Nations action. The persistence of such violations has led us to target our activities more directly at specific areas where the violations are committed. Accordingly, advisory services and technical assistance have been made available to Governments to strengthen their judiciary, train law enforcement officials and assist with law reform. Training programmes for the administration of the justice sector, and advisory services for law reform, coupled with support for establishing national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights, now make up over 80 per cent of the activities of advisory services in the human rights area.

33. As at July 1997, there were 191 States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ensuring that the vast majority of children are now citizens of countries that have made legally binding commitments to promote and protect their human rights. Nevertheless, such practices as the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography remain critical problem areas and are addressed by a Special Rapporteur. The implementation of the Plan of Action on the rights of the child, recently developed by the High Commissioner, is an essential next step.

34. According to the 1997 report of UNICEF, *The Progress of Nations*, violence against women and girls is the most pervasive violation of human rights in the world today. It transcends the usual distinctions among countries based on such factors as national income. UNIFEM has developed a global women's human rights programme, focused on mainstreaming the rights of women, combating and eliminating violence against them, and strengthening women's knowledge and use of their human rights. Particular attention is devoted to securing universal ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the women's "bill of rights".

35. In a related area, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) advocates and supports through its country

programmes internationally agreed goals concerning reproductive rights, sexual relations and childbearing. The Fund has sponsored a variety of media and other public education campaigns during the past year. It also prepared a programming framework for eradicating female genital mutilation, which has already met with success in a community-based advocacy programme in Uganda.

36. The year 1998 will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the General Assembly will review progress in the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. The appointment in 1997 of a new High Commissioner, and the drawing up of the medium-term plan for 1998-2001, provide additional impetus to making this the era in which human rights are universally accepted as inherent to the promotion of peace, security, economic prosperity and social equity.

* * *

37. The trend towards democratization has been accelerating for some time. Democratic processes continue to be strengthened in Latin America and the Caribbean. Progress has also been marked in Africa. As I noted in my address to the annual Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity in June, the view that military coups against democratically elected Governments by self-appointed juntas are not acceptable has become an established norm. Africa is also experimenting with new constitutional formulas and forms of governing in multi-ethnic States, as illustrated by Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali and South Africa.

38. The value that Member States attach to democratization is reflected in the large number of requests the United Nations receives for electoral assistance — no fewer than 80 in the past five years. United Nations electoral assistance seeks in the first instance to enhance the effectiveness of international observers in making assessments regarding the legitimacy of an electoral process and its outcome, and to recommend election-related policy changes through dialogue with the Government, political parties and civil society. The international observation of recent elections in Algeria, Ghana, Madagascar, Mali and Yemen has been supported in this manner. Recognizing the need to foster the sustainability of local democratic institutions, the United Nations also emphasizes the importance of building the domestic institutional capacity of Member States in constitutional and electoral law reforms and strengthening Governments' own institutional capacities to organize elections. During the last year, such assistance has been provided to Bangladesh, the Comoros, the Gambia, Guyana, Haiti, Liberia, Mali and Mexico.

39. In the long run, the transition to sustained democratic consolidation requires promotion of the rule of law and respect for human rights, creation of free media, tolerance of opposition, and an independent civil society. The experience of El Salvador and Nicaragua shows that the United Nations can help such democratic processes to take root even in difficult conditions. In Haiti, the United Nations activities have assisted in maintaining an environment in which security and basic freedoms may be established.

40. With a view to strengthening cooperation on issues of democratization and good governance, the Secretariat in the coming year will undertake a series of consultations on lessons learned in constitutionalism, governance in multi-ethnic States and related topics, aimed at distilling insights for future activities.

41. In sum, despite setbacks and difficulties, progress is being made in transitions towards good governance, human rights and democratization. This augurs well for the achievement of critical national and international policy objectives, as well as for the aims and aspirations enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

B. International economic cooperation and sustainable development

42. Competent, accountable and responsive state institutions are one building block for the achievement of significant progress towards prosperity and stability. A conducive and supportive international economic environment is equally important, however, and fostering such an environment is a core element of the Organization's mission.

43. Two major events of the past year, both in June 1997, concern the work of the Organization in international economic and social cooperation. The first was the adoption by the General Assembly of its Agenda for Development. The second was the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, convened to review the implementation of Agenda 21, the global plan of action for sustainable development adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held at Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Both have implications for the substance as well as the organization of United Nations activities in this domain.

44. The Agenda for Development addresses not only conventional development issues but also stresses the mutually supportive though complex relationships among development, peace, democracy, good governance and human rights. It affirms the United Nations role in the field of development, and identifies ways of reinforcing the capacities and effectiveness of the United Nations system in that field.

45. The special session of the Assembly occasioned a sober reflection on the limited progress that has been achieved in implementing the agreements reached at the Rio Conference. In addition, the special session marked the first such review of global conferences convened by the United Nations in recent years. It is envisaged that similar reviews will take place of the other conferences. Taken together, the lessons gained from these reviews will inform and help shape national and international policy into the next century.

* * *

46. As noted in the introduction, the economic context for development has undergone substantial change in recent years. At the national level, liberalization and economic reform have been the predominant trends in the 1990s, while internationally globalization has been the driving force. Both dimensions have been the subject of sustained attention by the Secretariat and the respective intergovernmental bodies. For example, in the 1997 *World Economic and Social Survey* it is suggested that all developing countries and countries with economies in transition need to raise per capita income by at least 3 per cent annually in order to make progress in reducing unemployment and alleviating poverty. To achieve those levels of growth, the report contends, the less affluent countries in particular require a more conducive external economic environment than now exists for them, an issue discussed in depth by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1997.

47. Unfavourable trends in official development assistance cast a serious shadow over the development prospects of lower-income countries. Most African and a number of other vulnerable countries are unlikely to reap the benefits of their recent economic reforms without the sustained support of the international community. The past year has nevertheless seen some encouraging initiatives, many resulting from the new global partnership proposed by the major industrialized countries at their summit meeting at Lyon, in June 1996. They include the second Tokyo International Conference on African Development, the "African Growth and Opportunity Act" proposed by the United States of America, the Swedish "Partnership Africa", and the planned successor to the fourth Lomé Convention concluded between the European Community and African, Caribbean and Pacific States. An important task for the United Nations in the years ahead will be to develop new forms of partnership between developed and developing countries — partnerships that meet the needs and aspirations of developing countries and are also consistent with global economic conditions and attitudes.

48. In the area of international trade, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has repositioned itself for this challenge. In the past year, it has refocused its policy analysis work, intergovernmental deliberations and operational activities. UNCTAD is examining the relationship between globalization and development, together with ways of promoting the effective integration of all developing countries into the international trading system. It is supporting efforts by developing countries to improve their investment climate, increase their technological capacities, and identify and exploit opportunities for enterprise development. At the same time, UNCTAD remains deeply involved with capacity-building in the least developed countries. Paralleling these programmatic changes, the UNCTAD intergovernmental and secretariat structures have been substantially streamlined, the number of meetings cut, staff size reduced and considerable savings achieved.

49. The regional commissions also have been re-examining their work programmes. For example, the Economic Commission for Europe is addressing the consequences of the accession of central European countries to the European Union, the transition processes of countries in south-eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, and several transboundary issues, including border-crossing; energy and transport infrastructures; and the environment. The Economic Commission for Africa has focused on regional trade and investment concerns, particularly on post-Uruguay Round challenges and opportunities for Africa. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia has curtailed some of its activities, notably in agriculture and industry, while expanding its endeavours in other areas such as water resources development, energy and transport. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean pursued a variety of analytic and policy issues in the past year, including the compatibility between preferential trade agreements and a more open international trading system. It also instituted several reform measures, among which is a pilot scheme to establish a clearer and enhanced accountability on the part of its secretariat vis-à-vis the Commission in exchange for greater delegation of authority and flexibility. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, at its April session, committed itself to streamlining the Commission, and pledged to make it a vital centre of research and other development activities for the region, especially for those countries in which widespread poverty lingers.

50. Much of the recent work of the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies has focused on translating into action the plans and programmes agreed upon at the global conferences held earlier in the decade. In addition to the special session of the General Assembly on "Rio +5", the 1997 meetings of the Commission on Population and Development, the Commission for Social Development and the Commission on the Status of Women concerned

follow-up issues to the conferences held at Cairo, Copenhagen and Beijing.

51. Similarly, the Secretariat's work programme in each of these areas was oriented towards the priorities identified at the conferences and the subsequent sessions of the Commissions. To cite but one illustration, the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality met for the first time in October 1996, chaired by the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women. The Committee is charged with promoting gender mainstreaming and coordinating the response of the United Nations system to the Beijing Conference and other United Nations conferences and summits.

52. Improvements in data collection and dissemination have been an important dimension of the United Nations system's conference follow-up. In the past year the Statistics Division has produced, in cooperation with the Population Division and the European Union, revised recommendations on statistics of international migration and, in cooperation with the regional commissions and the European Union, the principles and recommendations for population and housing censuses. The collection, updating and improved dissemination of more traditional data remain important aspects of the Organization's work. Thus, the 1996 revision of the official United Nations population estimates and projections showed slower world population growth, lower levels of fertility, more diverse trends in mortality and increased migration flows during the first half of the 1990s than in prior decades. The revision also documented the devastating mortality effects of the AIDS pandemic, particularly for Africa.

53. The Organization continues to take advantage of improvements in technology to enhance the dissemination of information. For example, the *Monthly Bulletin of Statistics* is now available on the World Wide Web. The Population Information Network serves as a repository of population data and information, and has also assisted developing countries in creating population information sites on the Internet. Similarly, the Division for the Advancement of Women, together with the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, initiated an Internet space, Womenwatch, on global women's issues. Linkages and partnerships with a network of non-governmental organizations promote accelerated action by civil society to advance the status of women and their human rights.

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54. Sustainable development is a fundamental challenge facing humanity as it enters the twenty-first century: how to provide for the needs of a growing world population without destroying the natural resource base on which it depends. The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development mapped out a detailed plan for achieving sustainable, long-term development. The work of the United Nations on sustainable development during the past year was focused, in large part, on preparations for the special session of the General Assembly.

55. At that session, the General Assembly made it clear that developed countries must significantly strengthen their financial and technological support to developing countries if the latter are to mobilize national resources in pursuit of global environmental goals. The Assembly agreed to continue a political process under the Commission on Sustainable Development on the subject of forests, including consideration of an instrument, possibly legally binding, intended to ensure sustainability. It also decided to initiate intergovernmental discussions on the problems of freshwater scarcity and the energy sector.

56. No agreement was expected, nor was any reached, on the issue of climate change, but the special session did raise public and political awareness of the need to address this issue through a cooperative strategy, and to bridge the key gaps in the political consensus needed to strengthen the principal instrument of that strategy, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The next step is for the developed countries to adopt legally binding commitments to limit and reduce their emissions of gases that contribute to global warming. This is the main objective of the next session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, to be held at Kyoto, Japan, in December 1997. Ultimately, the Convention's objective of stabilizing global greenhouse gases at "safe" levels cannot be achieved by the developed countries alone, but will also require the cooperation of developing countries.

57. The first edition of the *Global Environment Outlook* was published by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) early in 1997. It notes that over the last decade the state of the global environment has continued to deteriorate and that significant environmental problems remain deeply embedded in the socio-economic fabric of countries in all regions. While some progress is reported in curbing pollution and resource degradation, worsening trends are found in areas ranging from emissions of toxic substances and greenhouse gases to natural resource degradation and desertification.

58. Mindful of these trends, the Governing Council of UNEP, at its nineteenth session, adopted measures to strengthen the Programme's work in environmental monitoring, assessment and early warning. Agreements were also reached on the implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities; on measures to reduce the risks to

human health from hazardous chemicals; and on action to reduce persistent organic pollutants. Progress has been made on these issues in 1997.

59. The accelerating process of urbanization affects all dimensions of sustainable development. The seriousness of this issue animated the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), held at Istanbul in 1996. Over the past year, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements increased its support to developing countries for shelter and services, urban management and policy reforms, and devising guidelines and indicators by which to measure progress towards achieving adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development. As requested by the General Assembly, the Commission on Human Settlements at its session in May 1997 reviewed and adapted its working methods so as to involve organizations of local authorities and other relevant groups in civil society, especially the private sector.

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60. The Agenda for Development and the special session of the General Assembly, as well as related activities at the intergovernmental level, have all stressed — and the Organization's work programme in these areas has experienced — the multifaceted and intersectoral nature of the concerns at hand. This poses a major institutional challenge: how most effectively to service them at the level of the Secretariat. What is required is not merely more efficient administrative support. Of even greater importance is better integrating the Organization's analytical, normative and operational functions, and enhancing the relevance of its analytical and normative work for policy formulation and action.

61. It was with these aims in mind that I decided to merge the three Secretariat departments in the economic and social spheres into one Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The new consolidated Department will be far better equipped to perform its complex functions in an integrated manner. The merger will also yield efficiency savings, which I am proposing to dedicate to the development account that I recommended to Member States as part of my July reform plans.

C. Development operations

62. Gross disparities continue to characterize the world today — in income, access to services, and opportunities to lead a life worthy of human dignity. The challenge of development remains profound, and the condition of poverty profoundly disturbing. Meeting the challenge requires enhanced support to developing countries, quite apart from creating conducive domestic and international contexts.

63. The United Nations has forged a global agenda specifying the many dimensions of development, and has devised plans to implement agreed objectives. The tasks are immense, however, and the available resources have become stagnant. United Nations development programmes and funds have, therefore, sought ways to stretch available resources by coordinating their strategic resource allocation, beginning with the harmonization of programme cycles in 1996, and by collaborating more extensively at the country level.

64. To accelerate this process, and building on its success, one of the most consequential of my July reform proposals is the creation of a United Nations Development Group. Chaired by the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, the Group also comprises UNICEF and UNFPA, with other entities participating as warranted by their interests and mandates. The United Nations Development Group is structured so as to maintain and reinforce the distinctive nature of its constituent units, while facilitating their functioning in a more unified, cooperative and coherent framework at the headquarters level and in the field. It holds great promise of amplifying the impact of United Nations development activities.

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65. From 132 field offices serving more than 170 countries, the United Nations Development Programme fosters policies and capacities for poverty eradication and sustainable human development. During 1996, UNDP implemented a new resource allocation formula whereby nearly 90 per cent of its core funds of some $850 million are assigned to low-income countries. Its core resources are augmented by some $1.2 million in restricted funds and cost-sharing arrangements. The Programme's primary focus continues to be on building national capacity for poverty eradication and the creation of employment and sustainable livelihoods. Projects in the past year involved more than 80 countries, and included support for economic management (36 countries in Africa), the design and implementation of national poverty reduction programmes (China, India, Mongolia and 23 African countries), restructuring public expenditures (Burkina Faso) and monitoring the impact of economic reform on vulnerable groups (Mongolia). In 1997-1998, the resources devoted to gender mainstreaming activities are being increased to one fifth of core funds.

66. In the area of environment and development, UNDP in 1996 supported the efforts of developing countries to implement the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification as well as the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, and it secured

$47 million from the Global Environmental Facility for new activities related to the environmental needs of developing countries.

67. In 1996 UNDP began a Poverty Strategies Initiative. Many of the projects assist national partners to assess the magnitude and distribution of poverty nationwide, through household surveys and similar means. UNDP country offices are supporting the preparation of national human development reports, complementing the global *Human Development Report*. As of 1996, more than 50 countries had produced such reports; by the end of 1997 approximately 100 countries will have done so. These reports help to frame national anti-poverty campaigns and serve as a basis for monitoring their progress.

68. The United Nations Children's Fund is another core member of the newly constituted United Nations Development Group. In 1996, total UNICEF expenditures were $921 million, fully one third of which originated from non-governmental or private sources. Approximately 70 per cent of programme expenditures went to the care and protection of children in low-income countries, which in turn account for 70 per cent of the world's child population. Africa and Asia combined received some two thirds of total expenditures. Health was by far the leading sector of programme activity, followed by roughly equal emphases on education, nutrition and providing clean water supplies and sanitation services.

69. The Fund is an active and often leading participant in cooperative ventures within the wider United Nations context. Among the many notable examples is its work to prevent and treat the main causes of childhood illness and death, such as acute respiratory infections, diarrhoea, malaria, measles and malnutrition. UNICEF and the World Health Organization have promoted an integrated approach to the prevention and management of such childhood illnesses. UNICEF also cooperates with several international and national agencies in working towards the reduction of maternal mortality. A number of countries, notably Bangladesh, Indonesia, Mali, Romania and Viet Nam have, as a result of these efforts, initiated programmes that combine improved training of midwives, better access to family planning and women's health services, and improved emergency obstetric care.

70. The third core member of the United Nations Development Group is the United Nations Population Fund. Pledged contributions remained just above $300 million in 1996. Some 47 new country programmes were formulated in that year. UNFPA focuses on three main programme areas: reproductive health, including family planning and sexual health; population and development strategies; and advocacy. The Fund is especially concerned with helping countries to institutionalize the concept of reproductive health in national population programmes, and to integrate such programmes into primary health care systems. It has also stepped up its efforts in the area of adolescent reproductive health.

71. The World Food Programme (WFP) is a dual mandate agency, working in both emergency humanitarian relief and development operations. Roughly one third of its total resources of $1.4 billion is devoted to development. In 1996, new commitments available for development purposes were significantly lower than in previous years. Nevertheless, WFP development assistance reached more than 20 million people, in the form of human resource development projects as well as infrastructure and agricultural or rural development projects. Some 40 per cent of the beneficiaries were in sub-Saharan Africa, with another third in the Asia and Pacific region.

72. Africa receives the major share of assistance because WFP concentrates resources on the poorest people in the neediest countries; in all, some 30 sub-Saharan countries received assistance. At the same time, there has been progress in that region. Ethiopia, a recent recipient of both emergency relief and development assistance, produced a grain surplus last year that it exported to neighbouring Kenya and Somalia. Agricultural production in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Mauritius has increased an average of 4 per cent annually in recent years, compared to the overall sub-Saharan average of 2 per cent.

73. The development activities of WFP in the Asia and Pacific region centre largely on enabling poor rural people to improve their food security. This includes supporting self-help training and credit schemes for poor women (Bangladesh); strengthening the capacity of rural communities in selecting and implementing local infrastructure and income-generating projects (China, India and Nepal); rehabilitation programmes for war-affected people (Cambodia); and nutrition and health support for vulnerable groups (India and Viet Nam).

74. In Latin America and the Caribbean, WFP has assisted efforts by Governments and local communities to provide the poorest households with improved access to productive resources, and to give direct dietary support through targeted interventions in primary health care, and also in pre-school and primary education.

75. Several other organizations contribute significantly to the United Nations development efforts. Among them is the United Nations Development Fund for Women. Its development-related work supports programmes to strengthen women's economic capacity as entrepreneurs and producers. Key aspects of this work include supporting the inception and growth of international networks — such as the International Coalition on Women and Credit, which advocates gender-sensitive approaches to the extension of micro-credit. Regional initiatives also receive support. One

case in point is the Self-Employed Women's Association, which was enabled by UNIFEM support to strengthen its ultimately successful campaign for an International Labour Organization convention on home-based workers. UNIFEM also supports women's efforts to organize the production and marketing of goods and services.

76. The devastating impact of HIV/AIDS is a serious impediment to the development prospects of a number of low-income countries. The mission of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) is to lead, strengthen and support an expanded United Nations response to the epidemic, aimed at preventing transmission, providing care and support, reducing individual and community vulnerability, and alleviating its impact. At the country level, UNAIDS has supported the establishment of United Nations theme groups on HIV/AIDS, designed to coordinate United Nations efforts in support of national responses to HIV/AIDS. The sharing of experiences and expertise between countries is critical, as is the need for increased inter-country collaboration on the many HIV/AIDS issues that cut across borders. Accordingly, UNAIDS has set up small inter-country teams at Abidjan, Bangkok and Pretoria that are working closely with the co-sponsoring agencies to develop and consolidate technical resource networks and enhance national capacity for HIV/AIDS prevention and care.

77. In sum, the various development organizations of the United Nations pursue ambitious agendas because they face enormous challenges, but they are obliged to pursue those agendas with quite limited resources. My aim in establishing the United Nations Development Group is to augment the impact of those resources through forging closer collaboration among the constituent units at the strategic level and in field operations, enhancing the overall effort by focusing on core competencies and by sharing common premises and services.

D. Preventive diplomacy, peaceful settlement of disputes and disarmament

78. The assurance that members will not resort to violence but will settle their disputes in some other way is the cornerstone of all well-ordered societies. Zones characterized by such dependable expectations of peaceful change exist in all parts of the world today — though they co-exist with instances of violent conflict among and within States. It is a primary aim of the United Nations to expand the domain of peaceful change, by providing means through which conflicts may be contained and resolved and by dealing with their root causes.

79. The prevention of conflict both within and between States requires, first of all, ongoing attention to possible sources of tension and prompt action to ensure that tension does not evolve into conflict. During the past year, the Secretariat, in cooperation with other branches of the United Nations system, has worked to strengthen its global watch, which is designed to detect threats to international peace and security, enabling the Security Council to carry out or to foster preventive action.

80. Cooperation with regional organizations offers great potential. Close contacts with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) are a case in point. The two secretariats engage in almost daily consultations. The appointment of a joint United Nations/OAU Special Representative for the Great Lakes region, Mr. Mohamed Sahnoun, whose mandate and activities have been extended to other countries in central Africa, is a further manifestation of that cooperation. There is also increased cooperation between the United Nations and subregional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States and the Southern African Development Community.

81. Elsewhere, the United Nations continues to work closely with the Organization of American States, particularly in Haiti where the jointly fielded International Civilian Mission continues to do its work. The same is true of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe in the areas of human rights, electoral assistance, peacemaking and economic development. We will continue to build upon these positive experiences to promote a more rational and cost-effective division of labour between the world organization and regional entities, thereby bringing life to the provisions of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations.

82. The contrasting experience during the past year of two neighbouring countries in Central Asia underlines the fact that progress in resolving disputes hinges on certain conditions. The signing of the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan, though it has not fully prevented fighting, demonstrated the desire of the Tajik disputants to settle their differences peacefully. It also reflected the readiness of some key countries, such as the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation, to use their influence on the disputants to bring this about. In Afghanistan, on the other hand, despite the efforts of the United Nations Special Mission, backed by appeals from the Security Council, the warring parties have shown little interest in a peaceful solution. They have continued to wage a brutal and futile civil war. What is more, they have been encouraged by some Member States which continue to provide them with political and military assistance. All the while, the unremitting suffering of the people of Afghanistan worsens. I decided in July of this year to intensify United Nations efforts to help bring an end to the

strife in Afghanistan by dispatching Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi to make a fresh assessment and to recommend possible roles for the Organization.

83. I deeply regret that the absence of will to co-exist peacefully and the readiness, on the part of some elements, to change a negotiated political order through violence have led to serious regression in two countries where the United Nations had played a major role in restoring stability after years of civil war. The *coup d'état* in Sierra Leone in May was a reprehensible action that rightly received vigorous condemnation throughout the continent and the international community. It greatly set back the chances of stability and development in a country that is in desperate need of both. In Cambodia, the fragile coalition that was the result of painstaking and costly international efforts was rocked by the violent events of July.

84. The interlocking problems and crises that engulfed the Great Lakes region of central Africa following the devastating human tragedy in Rwanda required a correspondingly integrated approach on the part of the United Nations. While a measure of stability was re-established in Rwanda itself, my Special Envoy, Mr. Sahnoun, became deeply involved in international efforts to cope with the unfolding crisis in eastern Zaire. The rebellion that began there culminated in the capture of Kinshasa and the establishment of a new Government, which renamed the country Democratic Republic of the Congo. Mr. Sahnoun has collaborated with President Omar Bongo of Gabon in the search for a peaceful solution to the conflict in the Republic of the Congo, and he continues to lend his support to the efforts of former President Julius Nyerere of the United Republic of Tanzania to bring the political parties of Burundi to the negotiating table.

85. In response to the urgent need to address seriously charges that acts of genocide and violations of international humanitarian law had been committed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I dispatched an investigative team to establish the facts. Ultimately, solutions to the deep-rooted and widespread problems of the region can be devised only by its own people. At the same time, the international community must respond fully to the requirements and aspirations of the region through a long-term commitment to assist and sustain peace efforts.

86. In recent months, I have also taken initiatives to revitalize flagging processes towards the settlement of three long-standing disputes: Western Sahara, Cyprus and East Timor. In each case, I appointed a high-level emissary to try to move the process out of its rut. In the case of Western Sahara, I requested Mr. James Baker III to assess, together with the parties, prospects for the implementation of the settlement plan and to provide me with his recommendations. He has carried out several rounds of consultations with the parties. The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara remains in place to facilitate the implementation of a settlement.

87. To give new impetus to my mission of good offices in East Timor, I appointed Mr. Jamsheed Marker as my Personal Representative. He embarked on an intensive series of consultations with the Governments of Indonesia and Portugal on how best to reinvigorate the tripartite talks that had been held under the auspices of my predecessors since 1983. He also visited East Timor. On the basis of those discussions, I invited the Foreign Ministers of Indonesia and Portugal to a meeting in New York. I was encouraged by the assurances from the two Governments that the negotiations would be fruitful. I also believe it useful to continue the all-inclusive East Timorese dialogue, to enable the people of East Timor to contribute practical ideas in the search for a lasting solution.

88. The third area where I have tried to reactivate a previously moribund peace process is Cyprus, in which a long-standing United Nations peacekeeping presence has played an essential role in preventing the resumption of hostilities. I invited the leaders of the two communities to a series of face-to-face talks, their first in three years, under the chairmanship of my Special Adviser on Cyprus, Mr. Diego Cordovez. The first round was held outside New York in July, a second in Switzerland in August. Although it has not yet been possible to reach agreement on substantive matters, the two leaders remain committed to achieving an overall settlement under my good offices, and I intend to proceed with the mission.

89. Finally, the use of mandatory sanctions is a valuable tool available to the Security Council, permitting the United Nations to bring pressure to bear without recourse to force. However, concern has been expressed about the negative effects of such measures on the most vulnerable groups among the civilian population, as well as their collateral effects on other States. The oil-for-food programme in Iraq, which came into effect in December 1996 and was extended in June 1997, represents the first systematic attempt by the Council to address the humanitarian needs of a civilian population in a country remaining subject to sanctions. I shall encourage consideration by the General Assembly and the Security Council of possible ways to render sanctions a less blunt and more effective instrument.

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90. In the past 12 months, significant progress in arms regulation and disarmament has been achieved through multilateral treaty-making, in several cases through the Conference on Disarmament. Treaties covering a wide range of weapons of mass destruction have been negotiated, extended or bolstered, or have entered into force. The new,

institutionalized review process of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons commenced, the historic Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was concluded, the Chemical Weapons Convention came into force, and agreement was reached by the parties to the Biological Weapons Convention to intensify their efforts to negotiate verification provisions. There has been further consolidation of the various nuclear-weapon-free-zone arrangements, most of which now enjoy the full support of the nuclear-weapon States. The momentum that has been generated by these achievements should be maintained, in particular with a view to substantially reducing and ultimately eliminating the remaining nuclear stockpiles.

91. Notwithstanding these accomplishments, the absence of norms governing conventional weapons, especially light weapons and small arms, is of mounting concern. Little has been done to curb their rapidly escalating proliferation. This situation creates perverse chains of events. Member States ask the United Nations to deal with certain armed conflicts. In at least 15 such conflicts today the primary or sole tools of violence are small arms and light weapons. They are readily available on world markets. Indeed, there is intense competition to export these weapons, including to the conflict areas in which the United Nations is struggling to promote peace, thereby exacerbating the intensity and duration of those conflicts. The consequent losses of life and the displacement of people within countries and to neighbouring areas add, in turn, to the humanitarian crises that the United Nations is called upon to alleviate.

92. The challenge for the international community is to devise means to contain the spread of such weapons, especially to areas in conflict. One is through promoting the principle of openness and transparency in military matters. In this regard, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms enjoys the wide support of Member States and should be strengthened. The commendable initiative recently taken in West Africa to declare a moratorium on the export, import and production of light weapons is another constructive measure.

93. Finally, the efforts under way to ban anti-personnel landmines should be universally encouraged, and effective means to eliminate these vile weapons should be adopted at the earliest opportunity. Landmines have been described as weapons that do not get put away after a war; they remain in place to maim and kill — some 2,000 people every month, mostly civilians. Significant progress at last may be at hand. In the autumn of 1996 a group of countries, together with the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, galvanized the pro-ban movement in what has become known as the Ottawa process. To date, as many as 117 States have stated publicly that they will sign an international treaty at Ottawa in December 1997 in support of a global ban on the manufacture, production, use and export of anti-personnel landmines. I strongly support this effort.

94. These and other new challenges of weapons proliferation make it necessary for the United Nations to revitalize its efforts in this domain. The fact that the world is no longer riven by super-Power rivalry makes it possible. Seizing the moment, I proposed in my July reform report the creation a new Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation, which will return the United Nations to centre stage in limiting the destructiveness of conflicts by limiting the spread of the weapons that fuel them.

E. Humanitarian action

95. When the peaceful settlement of disputes fails — or is deliberately rejected as a policy option — and armed conflict ensues, the impact on other States is often felt first through a surge of refugees, or by concern with the plight of internally displaced and other war-affected persons. The total number of victims of man-made humanitarian disasters today is unquantifiable. Those who are physically displaced by conflicts are estimated at 40 million; they exceed the victims of natural disasters by perhaps as much as a factor of 10. It is the aim of United Nations humanitarian agencies to provide timely and effective assistance as well as protection to those in need, and to advocate adherence to humanitarian norms.

96. Humanitarian aid to persons affected by conflict is undertaken in contexts that are becoming increasingly complex, volatile and dangerous. Missions are carried out amid contested or collapsed state structures, the breakdown of law and order and of the support mechanisms of civil society, and outright civil war. This state of affairs makes it necessary to couple relief efforts with more comprehensive approaches that include promoting political settlement, rebuilding capacity and restoring economic opportunities. Ominously, in a growing number of instances civilian populations have become the explicit target of combatants, whether to achieve their forcible displacement, use them as shields, terrorize or annihilate them. Humanitarian missions similarly have been impeded or denied access for reasons of political expediency, manipulated as part of the strategic calculus of warring factions, or subjected to attacks. These distressing practices pose very serious policy and moral dilemmas that the international community must address and resolve.

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97. The refugee population assisted by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) declined during 1996, from 15.5 million to 13.2 million,

owing in part to UNHCR efforts to secure voluntary repatriation but also, regrettably, to episodes of large-scale involuntary repatriation and evacuation, particularly in the Great Lakes region of central Africa. Internally displaced people now significantly outnumber refugees, with estimates ranging from 20 million to 25 million. UNHCR directly or indirectly assists nearly 5 million internally displaced persons and an equal number of former refugees and others who are in various stages of resettlement. The Emergency Relief Coordinator also serves victims of natural disasters.

98. The World Food Programme conducted a total of 57 relief operations in 1996, six of which (the Great Lakes region, Angola, Afghanistan, Iraq, Liberia and the former Yugoslavia) accounted for more than two thirds of all relief aid provided. More than 15 million of the assisted victims were women and children, who are usually the first to experience the effects of hunger in the midst of political violence, drought or other disasters. UNICEF continued to focus its extensive humanitarian efforts on issues related to nutrition, health, sanitation, and education for children in emergency situations. The United Nations Centre for Human Rights and UNICEF provided support for an important expert report to the Third Committee of the General Assembly on the impact of armed conflict on children, the most comprehensive analysis of the subject ever undertaken. The United Nations Population Fund concluded an agreement with UNHCR in the past year to provide emergency reproductive health care to displaced persons and refugees. In addition, UNAIDS produced guidelines for Governments and cooperating agencies, enabling them to adopt necessary measures to prevent the rapid epidemic spread of HIV in emergency settings and to care for those already affected.

99. The longest-standing United Nations humanitarian mission is the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). In addition to providing essential education, health, relief and social services to 3.4 million refugees, UNRWA has undertaken a range of projects aimed at developing infrastructure, improving living conditions and creating employment opportunities. The relocation of its headquarters from Vienna to Gaza in July 1996 helped strengthen the Agency's relationship with the Palestinian Authority. Yet the stagnation in donor contributions combined with the steady growth in the beneficiary population have led to a quantitative and qualitative decline in services.

100. Well after many conflict situations have passed, anti-personnel landmines remain a continuing humanitarian scourge. The Ottawa process, referred to in the previous section, aims to ban the manufacture, production and use of such mines, but the painstaking humanitarian work of reducing the dangers of existing mines must continue. Mine-awareness training and mine clearance, comprising technical surveys and verification, as well as minefield marking and eradication, require far greater resources. Training and skills transference are essential, in technical and management capacities alike.

101. The success of United Nations responses to complex emergencies and natural disasters depends critically on the availability of human, material and financial resources. Between September 1996 and August 1997, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs orchestrated 13 consolidated appeals on behalf of the United Nations system, intended to serve the needs of approximately 17 million people in Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, the Chechnya region, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Great Lakes region, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, the Sudan, Tajikistan and the former Yugoslavia. The combined funding requirements for two appeals — for the former Yugoslavia and the Great Lakes region — amounted to nearly half of the $1.8 billion requested. A total of $727 million has been pledged or carried over.

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102. During the past year the United Nations system continued to improve its capacity to deliver humanitarian assistance. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee has played a key role in this process. Progress was made in strengthening capabilities in early warning, contingency planning and information systems. For example, the main humanitarian agencies developed joint contingency planning methodologies, and undertook joint planning exercises in the Great Lakes region, West Africa and Central Asia.

103. To ensure predictability in collaboration, the main agencies have developed memoranda of understanding that delineate roles, maintain accountability and establish standby arrangements. Similarly, liaison between them and non-governmental organizations has become a more routine feature, both in the field and by means of monthly "interaction" meetings in New York and corresponding meetings at Geneva. In the case of the rapid deterioration of the situation in the Great Lakes region, a Regional Humanitarian Coordinator was appointed to take immediate responsibility for the strategic coordination of United Nations efforts in the entire area, including Burundi, the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and the refugees in the United Republic of Tanzania.

104. With regard to resource mobilization, as part of a review by the Economic and Social Council, an extensive assessment of the consolidated appeals process was undertaken in 1996. That process seeks not only to coordinate but also to prioritize funding needs, and the review led to its being expanded so as to include longer-term rehabilitation objectives — for instance, reintegrating demobilized soldiers and refugees, strengthening the administrative capacity of the States involved, and fostering

transition to development. Likewise, where appropriate the consolidated appeals process will include funding requirements for human rights field operations.

105. The growing interest and involvement of the Security Council in humanitarian questions is another welcome and timely development. It holds promise for a more fully integrated approach to conflict resolution in which all dimensions — political, humanitarian, development and human rights — are addressed in a mutually reinforcing manner.

106. Nevertheless, recent experience has shown that still more effective institutional arrangements are necessary. In particular, I considered the operational role of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to be problematic. The Department took on operational tasks in a limited and ad hoc manner without being adequately equipped for them, and that detracted from the Emergency Relief Coordinator's core functions of policy development, advocacy and coordinating humanitarian emergency responses. Accordingly, in my July reform proposals I announced that the Department would be replaced by a smaller Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, concerned exclusively with those core functions, and the Department's operational responsibilities transferred elsewhere. The reorganization is now under way.

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107. As noted at the outset of this section, a distressing characteristic of certain recent conflict situations is that the pursuit of strategic advantage by combatants has begun to include, and thus manipulate, the humanitarian presence. Worse still, civilian populations have become direct targets, and humanitarian workers subjected to harassment, hostage-taking, rape, and even murder. The help of Member States is required to cope with this mounting assault on innocent lives and international norms. As a first step, the Security Council recently issued a firm condemnation of attacks against refugees and other civilians, and called upon parties to conflicts to comply strictly with the rules of humanitarian law. What is needed is a comprehensive assessment of the moral, strategic and physical security dimensions of those threats to the very core of the United Nations humanitarian mission.

F. Peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building

108. Maintaining and restoring international peace and security is a fundamental purpose of the United Nations. Although the vision embodied in the Charter of a collective security system has not yet been realized in practice, the Organization has evolved significant innovations over the years, such as the instrument of peacekeeping. Early post-cold-war euphoria exaggerated the range of possibilities for expanding the scope of United Nations peace operations, but the more recent sense of limits may err in the opposite direction.

109. An already difficult task has been rendered more difficult, it is true, by the fact that so many post-cold-war conflicts have taken the form of internal factional violence and civil strife that have significant external repercussions. Important lessons have been learned from recent experience, however, as a result of which peacekeeping and its institutional support structures continue to be refined and adapted, while post-conflict peace-building has assumed an increasingly prominent role in the United Nations repertoire of means to achieve more lasting peace.

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110. The international community has developed a clearer understanding both of the limits of peacekeeping and also of its continuing usefulness. As a result of past setbacks, Member States are more aware of the risks associated with dispatching operations with resources which do not match their mandates. We have also learned that inaction in the face of massive violence and threats to international peace and security is not an acceptable — or viable — option. Though peace is far less costly than war, there should be no illusion that it can be achieved on the cheap.

111. Currently, approximately 22,500 soldiers and civilian police serve in 16 missions in countries around the world. Those missions are managed by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, of which Mr. Bernard Miyet became the Under-Secretary-General in February 1997. All help stabilize potentially volatile situations, and many involve extensive cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations. Only brief mention is made here or elsewhere in this report of major developments since the last reporting period.

112. In the Balkans, the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina and its International Police Task Force work closely with the NATO Stabilization Force to convert into reality the undertakings made at Dayton, Ohio. The United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium achieved significant aims with the demilitarization of the local Serb forces, and in facilitating the elections held in April 1997. The United Nations Preventive Deployment Force is achieving its mandate in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; and the United Nations Mission of Observers in Prevlaka continues to monitor the situation in that area.

113. In Georgia, the United Nations Observer Mission cooperated with Commonwealth of Independent States peacekeeping forces to enable the parties to seek a political

solution. The United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan supported the negotiation process that resulted in the general peace agreement signed in Moscow in June 1997. In Haiti, the United Nations is assisting in the rebuilding of that country's police force, and works with the Organization of American States in the field of human rights. The United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan continues to perform its functions. I am encouraged by recent moves towards a dialogue between the parties.

114. The United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia is nearing the completion of its mandate, which it has pursued in conjunction with the Economic Community of West African States, to monitor a ceasefire and verify disarmament and demobilization. Those steps paved the way for the elections and installation of a new government in the summer of 1997. Elsewhere in Africa, it has been possible to replace the United Nations Angola Verification Mission III with a smaller follow-on operation but, because the peace process in Angola appears to have reached an impasse, renewed efforts are necessary to consolidate national reconciliation and monitor human rights.

115. The Middle East remains one of the most critical points of tension in the world today. It is my hope that the Israeli-Palestinian peace process will be revived and its forward momentum fully restored. The United Nations contributions to stability in the region include the humanitarian activities of UNRWA, discussed in the previous section; the development-related work of the Special Coordinator, dealt with below; and three peacekeeping missions: the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. With the cooperation of Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic, the efforts of UNDOF have been successful on the Golan Heights. In southern Lebanon, on the other hand, hostilities have continued between Israeli forces, with auxiliaries, and Lebanese groups. Elsewhere in the Middle East, the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission helps to ensure stability in the area of its deployment.

116. During the last year the Organization also planned and prepared for, but did not deploy, a mission to Sierra Leone; carried out significant contingency planning for possible missions in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of the Congo; and began, and successfully concluded, an observer mission in Guatemala.

117. In the context of the current effort by the international community to strengthen the United Nations, it is crucial to maintain and improve the Organization's ability to plan, manage and conduct peacekeeping missions. The Secretariat is reviewing cumbersome or inappropriate rules and procedures that govern support for field operations, such as rules for recruitment, procurement and settlement of third-party liability claims. We are also exploring ways to ensure a unified effort in the entire United Nations system in all peacekeeping and peace-building activities, both in the field and at Headquarters. The creation within the Secretariat of an Executive Committee on Peace and Security is an important step towards that goal.

118. Other measures fall within the jurisdiction of Member States. Many of the structures and functions that are essential for peacekeeping activities lack stable funding, and many essential tasks are discharged by personnel made available temporarily to the United Nations by Member States. Indeed, half of all Professionals in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations fall into this category. The Organization needs a stable base of budget resources in the area of peacekeeping that reflects its real personnel requirements. Similarly, action on the proposal to create a rapidly deployable mission headquarters, around which the components of peacekeeping operations could be assembled, depends on the willingness of Member States to allocate the necessary financial resources.

119. Additional elements of a rapid deployment capacity are being explored. A number of States are developing military units that could deploy without undue delay upon a decision of the Security Council. A group of States consisting of Austria, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland and Sweden signed a letter of intent in December 1996 to form a standby high readiness brigade within the framework of United Nations standby agreements. Some of those States have since moved further towards that objective. While we very much welcome these developments, the availability of troops will continue to depend on the willingness of their respective Governments to commit them in any given instance.

120. One key priority for the coming year is to draw on the experience gained in co-deployment in such cases as Georgia, Liberia and the former Yugoslavia to develop doctrine and guidelines so that the United Nations will be better prepared for such partnerships with regional organizations in the future. Ensuring that humanitarian strategies as well as longer-term development aims are fully integrated into the overall peacekeeping effort is another main priority in the year ahead. These are the challenges we must overcome as we seek to adapt the essential implement of United Nations peacekeeping to the crises we face today and will face tomorrow, and as we work to create a system of collective security for the twenty-first century.

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121. The United Nations system as a whole is focusing as never before on peace-building - action to identify and support structures that will strengthen and solidify peace. Experience has shown that keeping peace in the sense of

avoiding a relapse into armed conflict is a necessary but not sufficient condition for establishing the foundations of an enduring and just peace. Areas of additional activity may include military security, civil law and order, human rights, refugees and displaced persons, elections, local administration, involvement in public utilities, health, education, finance, customs and excise, reconstruction, and general attempts to return society to some sense of normality. No other institution in the world has the experience, competence, capacity for logistic support, coordinating ability, and universality that the United Nations brings to these tasks.

122. A good example of peace-building at work is the case of Guatemala, where the United Nations contributed to bringing about the conclusion of the last remaining conflict in Central America with the signing, on 29 December 1996, of the final peace agreement. The United Nations, which had been verifying human rights in Guatemala since 1994, was entrusted by the General Assembly with the verification of the final agreements also. The ceasefire and demobilization of combatants was achieved within its 60-day deadline. In addition to promoting human rights, the accords seek to strengthen democratic institutions and the administration of justice, to improve the electoral system, to address social and economic inequities with a view to permitting wider participation of citizens at all levels, and to define the army's new role in society. The implementation of the accords calls for United Nations verification until the year 2000. This is a major challenge that will require full cooperation from the people of Guatemala, as well as the sustained support of the United Nations system and the international community.

123. Short of such comprehensive objectives, the United Nations has been involved, in Angola, Mali and Nicaragua, with demobilization and rehabilitation of former combatants. This task includes quartering ex-combatants, disarming, demobilizing and transporting them home, and facilitating their socio-economic reintegration. Elsewhere, including Rwanda, the United Nations has sought to provide technical assistance and training to strengthen the judiciary and support the communal police.

124. There is a growing appreciation of the fact that efforts in support of development cannot cease during emergencies, but must continue to be vigorously supported. The appropriate United Nations entities have therefore devised development-oriented interventions to prevent relapses into crisis. Numerous projects were fielded during 1996-1997, involving UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP and UNIFEM. I have taken steps to ensure that the United Nations system as a whole is able to meet the challenges of post-conflict peace-building in a unified and coherent manner, and to that end have designated the Department of Political Affairs as the United Nations focal point for post-conflict peace-building. Sir Kieran Prendergast joined us in March 1997 to head the Department.

125. The United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) has a unique and strictly military peace-building mandate in verifying Iraq's full, final and complete disclosures on its prohibited weapons programmes. In the past year, the Security Council twice felt it necessary to condemn Iraq — once because the Commission's attempt to verify the destruction of missile engines was frustrated, and once because its movements were impeded and it was denied access to relevant sites. UNSCOM has identified significant continuing problems that will need to be addressed in the months ahead.

126. Also unique, but very different, is the Office of the Special Coordinator. It provides overall guidance to United Nations programmes and agencies in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and works closely with the World Bank, in assisting the Palestinian Authority to achieve an integrated approach to development and a self-sustaining economy and to establish effective administrative institutions.

127. The cause of constructing a just peace also requires effective mechanisms of accountability for past wrongs. In many instances, national means are in place and suffice, though they may require international assistance, but some violations of fundamental human rights are so massive and some acts of violence so egregious that humanity as a whole is offended, and humanity as a whole must act. Significant steps have been taken along this road in recent years.

128. The International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia marked a major milestone in 1997 by delivering its first judgement and sentence. Moreover, its relationships with international forces and national authorities reached a turning point with the arrest and transfer to The Hague of three indicted persons. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda recovered lost ground that resulted from management and administrative deficiencies, and currently has three trials under way and 21 accused persons awaiting trial.

129. Lastly, the Preparatory Committee on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court has almost completed its work on a consolidated text of a draft statute. I am firmly of the belief that the establishment of such a court would contribute profoundly to post-conflict peace-building, serve as a deterrent against future genocidal violence, and mark a major step in the evolution of the rule of law at the international level. I endorse and support the creation of the court by an international conference that is scheduled to convene in 1998. Its birth at the end of a century that has been one of the bloodiest in history would bequeath a more robust realm of reason to the new.

G. The new transnational threats

130. The same means of communication and personal mobility that make it possible for civil society actors to function globally also enable "uncivil society" actors to do so. In this world of increasingly porous borders new threats have emerged to national security, economic development, democracy and sovereignty in the form of transnational networks of crime, drug trafficking, money-laundering and terrorism. By consolidating the several relevant functions into one single Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, based in Vienna, and by appointing Mr. Pino Arlacchi, an expert on organized crime, to lead it, I have sought to reposition the United Nations to help contain this growing threat.

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131. The United Nations and the specialized agencies have long played a central role in the struggle to suppress international terrorism. Twelve multilateral treaties, as well as the declarations concerning measures to eliminate international terrorism, have been adopted for dealing with specific acts of terrorism. The General Assembly reviewed the legal instruments to identify gaps in the existing regime, and in 1996 established an Ad Hoc Committee to elaborate new international conventions for the suppression of terrorist bombings and the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism. The Committee also plans to develop a comprehensive legal framework for dealing with international terrorism.

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132. Organized criminal groups are spreading their operations around the globe. Developing countries and emerging democracies are prime targets owing to the vulnerabilities of their weak institutions. To help redress this problem, Member States adopted the Naples Political Declaration and Global Action Plan against Organized Transnational Crime in 1994, asking Governments to harmonize legislation and ensure that their justice systems were provided with the means to prevent and control organized transnational crime.

133. Under the auspices of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, a variety of practical actions and legal protocols followed from the Naples document in support of its objectives, including the establishment of databases, together with agreements on monitoring and information exchange. At its sixth session, in the spring of 1997, the Commission reviewed a draft convention to combat organized transnational crime, and took action on several specific manifestations of it, such as bribery and corruption, the smuggling of illegal migrants and the illicit traffic in children.

134. During the past year, the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division of the Secretariat provided assistance to the Economic Community of West African States in developing and implementing a regional convention on mutual assistance in criminal matters, and initiated a regional framework for cooperation in the area of extradition. The Division also helped the Government of South Africa to devise a witness protection programme; the Government of Kyrgyzstan to establish a specialized department within the Ministry of the Interior to fight organized crime; and the Government of Romania to strengthen the capacity of the criminal justice system to prevent and fight corruption and organized crime. Needs assessment exercises were undertaken in Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Bolivia, Georgia, Guinea, Pakistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Togo.

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135. To counter drug trafficking and abuse, the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) promotes adherence to and implementation of international drug control treaties, particularly the 1988 United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, which is the main framework for international cooperation. In 1996, the Programme assisted 15 Governments in drafting and implementing national drug control laws and regulations, including training for law enforcement personnel, national administrators, judges, magistrates and prosecutors.

136. In cooperation with the International Narcotics Control Board, the Programme also assisted Governments in efforts to prevent the diversion of drugs and their precursors into the illicit market. Regional assistance programmes to that end were undertaken in central, south and south-west Asia. The Programme also published a comprehensive global study and examined countermeasures intended to address the new threat posed by the illicit manufacturing, trafficking and abuse of a variety of stimulants, particularly amphetamines.

137. To assist Governments in combating illicit drug trafficking, UNDCP regional law enforcement advisers in eastern and southern Africa, Latin America and south-east Asia provided advisory services and technical assistance. In all, 16 law enforcement programmes were begun in the past year, with support emphasizing training for police and customs officials so as to augment their capacity to interdict and seize narcotic drugs. UNDCP also sponsored cross-border cooperation among drug law enforcement agencies, including in the border zones between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan and between India and Pakistan. Frameworks for cooperation and mutual assistance are also provided by regional plans of action, such as those in Africa and the Caribbean.

138. Cooperation with other organizations has a multiplier effect in the fight against drugs. UNDCP signed a memorandum of understanding with the World Customs Organization, establishing the basic principles of cooperation between the two organizations. They worked together in the implementation of a network of regional intelligence liaison offices, and 15 eastern and southern African States received support enabling them to detect new drug trafficking trends. Closer cooperation has also been established between UNDCP and the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol).

139. During the 1990s traffickers increasingly used commercial vessels as a major means of transporting illicit drugs in bulk quantity from source countries to markets. Consequently, UNDCP has initiated programmes to strengthen the capacities of Governments to counter illicit trafficking by sea and through seaports.

140. Efforts to reduce the demand for illicit drugs are an indispensable component of strategies to combat drug trafficking. However, many Governments lack the resources, knowledge and skills to develop and implement sustainable programmes of drug abuse prevention, treatment and rehabilitation. The support provided by UNDCP focuses on mobilizing civil society, particularly non-governmental organizations and the business community, the latter through workplace drug prevention programmes.

141. UNDCP also supports alternative development programmes aimed at breaking the hold that drug traffickers establish on regions affected by the illicit cultivation of narcotic plants, particularly the coca bush and the opium poppy. In 1996, the Programme initiated a four-year, $15.9 million, technical cooperation programme in Afghanistan and a five-year alternative development programme in the Wa region of Myanmar.

142. To deprive drug traffickers of the economic power and influence derived from the proceeds of their illicit activities, UNDCP assists Governments in efforts to counter money-laundering and confiscate assets gained from drug trafficking. The Programme is financing and supporting a $4.3 million global programme aimed at improving the capacity of the relevant legal and related law enforcement systems, which includes the creation of financial intelligence units to reduce the vulnerability of financial systems. Implementation of the programme will be undertaken in close cooperation with other organizations and entities affected by the money-laundering phenomenon. The fight remains a daunting challenge, however, as free trade and high-speed telecommunications, together with substantial resources, provide opportunities for criminals to diversify their operations, reduce risks and maximize profitability.

H. Legal affairs, management and communications

143. Without legal norms and instruments that are universally relevant and respected, without a clear sense of mission and high standards of performance, and without effective communications about United Nations aims and activities, the Organization's efforts would stand little chance of satisfying the needs and aspirations of countries and peoples alike. In each of these areas, the past year has seen significant gains: advancing the cause of international law in several important respects, elevating the quality of our management systems, and sharpening our message about the Organization's activities. These steps are putting in place the enabling and supportive infrastructure that will help United Nations operational activities achieve their desired results.

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144. The Office of Legal Affairs contributes substantively in its own right to the aims of the United Nations, and it also serves, in a supportive capacity, all other parts of the Organization.

145. Substantively, through its Codification Division the Office is deeply involved in the effort to establish an international criminal court and in the elaboration of new legal instruments to combat terrorism, referred to in the preceding sections. The International Trade Law Branch of the Office continued to assist the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law in removing obstacles to international trade through the progressive harmonization and unification of international trade laws. At its 1997 session, for example, the Commission adopted a model law on cross-border insolvency to promote legislation in cases where the insolvent debtor has assets in more than one State. Efforts are also under way in such novel areas as digital signatures. On the basis of a draft produced by the International Law Commission, the General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses in May 1997.

146. The entry into force of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Agreement relating to the implementation of Part XI of the Convention has led the United Nations to redesign its programme of information, advice and assistance in this field. The Office of Legal Affairs assists the various institutions created by the Convention, including the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, which was established and held its first meeting in June 1997; the International Seabed Authority, which completed its initial organizational work and has begun to function; and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, which is expected to do likewise in 1998.

147. In its supportive capacity, the work of the Office of Legal Affairs encompassed research and opinions on private and public international law; advice and services related to peacekeeping operations; and guidance to numerous subsidiary organs. The Office also helped to coordinate the legal services of the specialized agencies and other United Nations entities.

148. The Office participated in one of the main aspects of the reform process, the drafting and elaboration of a new Code of Conduct for United Nations staff, which is to be submitted to the General Assembly for its consideration. The Code sets out the core values inherent in the concept of the international civil servant, as well as the basic rights and obligations pertaining thereto. The new provisions are also intended to ensure that officials are accountable for their performance.

149. One of the Office's primary obligations under the Charter is to register and publish international treaties concluded by Member States. The Office continued its drive to eliminate the backlog in the Treaty Section, a task it expects to complete in the next few years. At the same time, important steps have been taken to make the United Nations treaty collection available via electronic media, so that a wider audience — not only diplomats and international lawyers but also non-governmental organizations, private sector enterprises, members of the academic community and others around the world — can gain access to this valuable resource.

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150. The Department of Administration and Management has accelerated the implementation of the Organization's management plan, which seeks improvements in five key, interrelated areas: human resources, the overall work programme, information, technology, and cost structure. The Organization's financial situation was also a major preoccupation, and the various reform and restructuring initiatives announced throughout the year brought added impetus to these efforts.

151. To improve the management of human resources, the Department continued to build up in-house capacity for organizational development, staff development and planning. Action-oriented seminars were held. Staff development initiatives focused on upgrading skills, enhancing accountability and delegating authority. The Secretariat's efforts have been impaired, however, by the exceedingly complex rules and regulations governing human resources and financial operations. Increasingly intrusive scrutiny by intergovernmental bodies, coupled with additional layers of oversight mechanisms, exacerbated this situation still further.

152. The management of the United Nations work programme benefited from good progress in revising the format of the medium-term plan, which is the Organization's principal policy directive and provides the framework for the preparation of its biennial budgets. Still, as in the past, Member States encountered great difficulties in agreeing on strategic imperatives.

153. Effective management is heavily dependent on the availability of information. The Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) has now been deployed to five duty stations. As the "home" for all of the Organization's administrative processes — personnel, finance, procurement — IMIS is fast becoming the administrative backbone of our worldwide operations. Several other entities and specialized agencies have adopted, or are considering adopting, IMIS, suggesting that the time is not far off when managers throughout the United Nations system will adhere to a common, unifying and efficient standard.

154. The need for electronic support services has increased dramatically, requiring an expanding and more complex technological infrastructure. Such applications, in addition to IMIS, include the Internet and Intranet and emerging technologies such as video-conferencing and remote translation. A strategic plan for technology has been devised and put in place, and great strides have been made in updating existing infrastructure. Future funding levels must, however, ensure that the Organization is capable not only of avoiding technical malfunctions and obsolescence but also of investing in its technological development.

155. With respect to the cost structure, the Organization has managed to stay within increasingly tight budgets while delivering the outputs mandated by Member States. Even after cuts of $250 million — nearly 10 per cent of the previous budgetary base — it was possible to propose a negative growth budget for the biennium 1998-1999. The efficiency programme has been instrumental in identifying cost savings and in mitigating the impact of mandated reductions. The first round focused on projects proposed by staff and managers. Phase two, which is well under way, is addressing more fundamental issues: simplifying processes, delegating authority, and giving more responsibilities and flexibility to programme managers.

156. The Department of Management, as its new name indicates, is now poised to shift to a more proactive management culture, moving away from purely administrative control systems, and from piecemeal management improvements, to fundamental reform of the management practices of the Organization. Under this new approach, substantive units will have greater administrative flexibility, leaving the central management to concentrate on policy development, support services and compliance monitoring. Perhaps most significantly, less of the Organization's resources will be used for non-programme purposes, freeing resources for substantive efforts. At a time

of constraints on resources for development, this is good news for our clients — the countries and peoples of the world that need United Nations economic and social programmes.

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157. I wish to draw to the attention of Member States a different and very serious matter regarding United Nations personnel: the growing threats to their security. Events over the past year have exposed United Nations staff members to an exponential increase in risks and deliberate violence. Since September 1996, 21 civilian staff members have lost their lives in the performance of their duties.

158. Hostage-taking constitutes a new threat to United Nations personnel. Since 1 September 1996, 47 staff members have been held hostage for varying periods of time. Of equal concern is the fact that staff members continue to be detained or are missing. These statistics do not include staff members who were attacked, harassed, injured, beaten or raped. Nor do the numbers measure the loss, trauma and emotional stress suffered by the families. Adequate funds must be found for the necessary measures to ensure the security and safety of United Nations personnel.

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159. The power of information, clearly recognized by the founders of the United Nations, has been elevated to a higher plane in recent years with rapid advances in information and communications technology. High-tech or not, information is a dynamic force for education and cross-cultural understanding and for promoting freedom, democratization and broader participation by people in the decisions affecting their lives. Its great potential must be harnessed by, and for, the United Nations.

160. Early on, I identified the reorientation of the United Nations public information activities as one of the more urgent requirements of the reform process. A task force of prominent communications experts was convened to examine all aspects of the mandates, arrangements and operations of the Department of Public Information. In its report, "Global vision, local voice", the task force made far-reaching proposals and recommendations to fundamentally revamp the Organization's communications strategy and practices. I have acted on those recommendations, and implementation measures are under way.

161. In the meantime, the Department continued to adapt itself to the new communications environment. Considerable emphasis has been placed on the Internet. The United Nations Web site now registers 700,000 to 800,000 "hits" per week, and the range of available material is being expanded. In October 1996, the Department launched the CyberSchoolBus, an interactive on-line educational programme that is averaging more than 250,000 hits per week and exemplifies our efforts to focus on youth and to collaborate with teachers, educational institutions and teachers' associations. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library home page has been expanded also, another step in our efforts to turn it into a "library without walls" — and similar steps have been taken at Geneva.

162. The Department's embrace of the Internet has resulted in a variety of quantifiable dividends. Posting the catalogue of United Nations publications has led to an increase in sales. Print runs have been reduced, saving paper and cutting down on physical distribution requirements. Press releases issued by the Department, the only immediately written accounts of the proceedings of intergovernmental meetings held at Headquarters and at the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna, are posted instantly on the Internet, reaching a vast new audience and allowing for a 25 per cent decrease in print runs. Permanent Missions to the United Nations in New York and Geneva, all of which are now on-line, have also realized savings in terms of telecommunications costs since many no longer have to send important documents by mail or fax to their Foreign Offices.

163. At the same time, the Department recognizes that information technology is not yet universally available, and has therefore continued to use traditional media — press, radio and television. United Nations radio, for example, is moving towards an international broadcasting capacity, as provided for in the medium-term plan. The Department has also strengthened its partnerships with key television executives through the United Nations World Television Forum.

164. United Nations peacekeeping, peacemaking, and humanitarian actions present special communications challenges. Several "concentric" audiences must be reached if United Nations efforts are to be sustained: the population in areas immediately affected; the international media; and a broad, global audience whose support is essential. The past year has seen intensified consultation with the Departments of Humanitarian Affairs, Political Affairs and Peacekeeping Operations, and standard guidelines and a manual for information components in the field are being finalized. Since timely information is particularly important with respect to field operations, the Department of Public Information has shifted its emphasis from print to electronic dissemination.

165. Substantive priorities during the past year included the General Assembly's mid-term review of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, the special session of the General Assembly to review the implementation of Agenda 21 — "Rio +5" — and planning for the upcoming fiftieth anniversary of the Universal

Declaration of Human Rights and the special session of the General Assembly on drugs.

166. The network of United Nations information centres and services plays a pivotal role in all of these activities, galvanizing local non-governmental organizations and other United Nations partners in support of United Nations themes and issues. The integration of United Nations information centres with field offices will continue, as approved by the General Assembly, on a case-by-case basis and in consultation with the host country. In industrialized countries, the information centres will continue to strengthen their collaboration with other members of the United Nations system and with national groups, with a thrust towards mobilizing national resources in support of the United Nations.

III

The steps ahead

167. This is my first opportunity to report to Member States on the work of the Organization. Although I have served the United Nations for more than 30 years, never before has it been my responsibility to form a considered judgement about its overall functioning and efficacy. Having done so now I find that, all in all, I am prudently optimistic.

168. As documented in the preceding pages, the United Nations has taken considerable strides in recent years to adapt to the far-reaching changes in its external environment. No sector of its activities has remained unaffected. Indeed, within the framework of principles and missions enunciated by the Charter, entirely new programme areas and work modalities have been initiated and others redefined as the needs of the international community have evolved. Moreover, despite the numerous constraints under which they operate, and notwithstanding occasional exceptions, the inventiveness of the Organization's senior managers is commendable and the dedication of its staff a source of pride.

169. Much yet needs to be done, however. In chapter II of this report, I indicated some of the desirable and necessary steps ahead in the various substantive programme areas and support structures. Here I wish to draw attention to critical overarching issues that affect the future performance of the Organization.

170. The fiscal precariousness of the United Nations is unprecedented and debilitating. For too many years we have been forced to "borrow" from the peacekeeping account to cover regular budget shortfalls caused by non-payment of dues by some Members. That is to say, we have not reimbursed Member States for the cost of troops they provided and *matériel* they supplied in good faith and pursuant to Security Council resolutions. Now that source, too, is nearing depletion. I hope and trust that we shall soon be able to put this problem behind us, and that in the future all Member States will fulfil their legal obligations to the Organization — and one another — by paying their dues in full and on time.

171. Apart from the fiscal problems caused by arrears, as I noted in the opening section of this report long-term shifts at the national and international levels alike imply that fundamental change is in store for the workings of intergovernmental organizations. The resources available to such organizations, including the United Nations, are declining relative to the magnitude of the tasks they face and to the capacities of other actors, especially the private sector. What is more, the very concept of intergovernmentalism as we know it is being altered as a result of the redefinition of the role of government and the means of governance now under way throughout the world.

172. In this transformed context, the Organization's past pattern of incremental adaptations will not suffice. To succeed in the new century, the United Nations must unleash its own major resource: the complementarities and synergies that exist within it. In other words, the United Nations must undergo fundamental, not piecemeal, reform. Three related steps are imperative. Each requires the support of Member States.

173. The first is to create the appropriate Secretariat structures that will permit the Organization to act as one within and across its diverse areas of activities. Acting as one does not mean moving in lock step. Nor does it imply denying the specific attributes of any component part. It does require that the Organization be capable of deploying its constituent units strategically while avoiding overlap and duplication, let alone competition, among them. Many of my proposals for reform are designed to achieve this aim: the position of Deputy Secretary-General, the Senior Management Group, the Strategic Planning Unit, four sectoral Executive Committees, and the United Nations Development Group, to cite the most important of them.

174. The second essential step is to reconfigure the balance of functions between the Organization's legislative bodies and the Secretary-General. Largely for reasons relating to the cold war practice of bloc politics, a large number of the rigidities with which the Organization is afflicted are, in fact, mandated. Member States demand and deserve accountability, but the Secretariat also needs flexibility to get

its job done in the most cost-effective manner. The current situation serves neither party well. Several of my reform proposals seek to redress this problem, including recommendations on streamlining the agenda and the deliberations of the General Assembly, instituting sunset provisions for new mandates, and most importantly moving towards a results-based system of budgeting.

175. Finally, even where the best of systems are in place, people matter. The United Nations staff is a precious resource, which in some measure has been squandered by rules and regulations that impede rather than serve the effective performance of its work. The Organization needs a functioning career development programme, meaningful criteria and evaluations of performance coupled with real incentive and disincentive systems, as well as a corporate culture that animates and unifies those who serve it. I look forward to joining Member States in devising personnel policies that will help bring these conditions about.

176. As we approach the new century, the international community has some way to go to realize the hopes and commitments of the Charter of the United Nations but, when we measure our progress against the state of the world a century ago, we can only be impressed by how far we have come. Indeed, one of the most significant differences between that *fin de siècle* and this is precisely the fact that international organizations now exist to remind, and enable, the world to do better. That is why it is our solemn and historic obligation to make the United Nations the most effective instrument possible for the achievement of peace and progress — for our children, and for theirs.

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